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18 means for providing by a supplier a candidate or candidates by
19 accessing the SMA Web site and submitting candidates and appending
20 resumes as appropriate; and
21 means for viewing by the user the supplier responses and
22 associated resumes and either accepting or rejecting each candidate
23 submitted.

REMARKS

The undersigned wishes to thank the Examiner, Mr. Jonathan P. Ouellette, for the courtesies shown him and one of the inventors, Mr. Russell Parks, in a telephone conference interview on Wednesday, March 26, 2003, in the above-identified patent application. The interview was arranged at the request of Mr. Ouellette who indicated that he believed that the disclosed invention was patentable but that he also believed that certain ones of the claims needed to be amended to more clearly define over the prior art. Mr. Ouellette particularly wanted to speak with Mr. Parks, who made the declaration under Rule 132 filed on February 12, 2003.

During the course of the interview, Mr. Ouellette asked Mr. Parks to articulate what he, Mr. Parks, considered to be novel over prior art Web based "head hunter" systems. In response, Mr. Parks provided a description of the Skills Matching Application (SMA) and how it differed from other systems. Mr. Parks stated that Skills Matching is an IBM proprietary application that creates an electronic link between the IBM requester of Services and Strategic Core IBM suppliers of Technical Resources. A supplier is enabled on the Skills Matching Application only after agreeing to IBM terms and conditions from the IBM Technical Services Supply Council. That agreement outlines such things as Skill description, a Cap (maximum) hourly rate for the particular skill description and other issues related to the procuring of this commodity. The Skills Matching Application has a table structure built within the application functionality that

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allows a requester to request a certain job description, and the SMA provides the IBM approved pricing, routes the request to the appropriate supplier(s) of that resource in the particular geographic area as well as creating the information and sending to the IBM requisitioning system to create a purchase requisition. The SMA tool can also differentiate between supplier responses that are not received at the agreed Cap price and can handle those responses appropriately. If a price comes in below the matrix SMA function mark, that request is recognized by the SMA as better than the Cap price and handles the response without IBM buyer intervention. If a price comes in above the Cap price, the SMA knows to direct this request to the appropriate IBM buyer. The SMA also has functionality to match Skills Descriptions to the appropriate suppliers of that skill within a region. How that differs from the traditional Monster Boards is that a requirement is focused to the proper supplier base. The SMA also controls the pricing aspect of a request. Monster Boards allow the supplier of services to state a target wage and the requester of services to state an offer wage. In contrast, using the SMA tool, the Wage is predetermined and all supplier has to do is respond with a candidate.

The SMA also supports the IBM Buyerless Process. What that means is that a response to a request for services that meets all the agreed to pricing, availability, skill, etc. parameters results in the purchase order being automatically generated without buyer intervention. A supplier then receives an electronic purchase order (PO). This is a key IBM objective for the procurement process.

To summarize, SMA is not an ad hoc application for the posting of resumes, as in a Web based "head hunter" application. The SMA system supports the IBM procurement process and is an End-to-End application when used to support the Buyerless IBM process.

Based on Mr. Parks' description, Mr. Ouellette suggested that certain ones of the claims be amended to more clearly tie the claimed invention to the invention as disclosed in the specification. In particular, Mr. Ouellette suggested that claim 1 be amended to be a system claim reciting the process steps in "means plus function" form. This supplemental amendment amends claim 1 as suggested

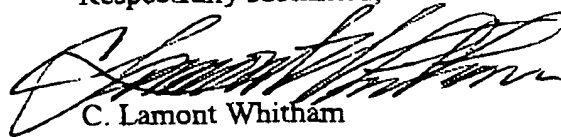
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by Mr. Ouellette. In addition, dependent claim 3 has been amended to reflect the amendment to claim 1. Claim 4 has also been amended similarly to claim 1.

Based on these amendments, it is believed that the application is now in condition for allowance, early notification of which is respectfully requested. Should, however, Mr. Ouellette believe that additional amendments are necessary, he is requested to call the undersigned to discuss the matter. Again, the undersigned thanks Mr. Ouellette for his careful consideration of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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Clean Copy of Amended Claims

1 1. A Skills Matching Application (SMA) which allows a user to
2 communicate requirements to technical service suppliers in a way that
3 significantly reduces the process time and improves the accuracy of
4 requests sent to suppliers comprising:
5 means for accessing the SMA from a Requisition/Catalog
6 (REQ/CAT) application;
7 means for prompting a user through a series of screens to enter a
8 Statement of Work (SOW) and complete a skills detail checklist for each
9 of the technical skills requested;
10 means for submitting the request to contracted suppliers by e-mail
11 notification notifying the supplier that a new request has been entered into
12 the SMA application for them to review and submit a candidate against;
13 means for receiving from a supplier a candidate or candidates with
14 appended resumes as appropriate; and
15 means for displaying for the user the supplier responses and
16 associated resumes.

1 3. The Skills Matching Application of claim 1, further comprising means
2 for responding to a user's selection of a candidate or candidates by
3 invoking an approval and procurement process.

1 4. A Web-based Skills Matching Application (SMA) which allows a user
2 to communicate requirements to technical service suppliers in a way that
3 significantly reduces the process time and improves the accuracy of
4 requests sent to suppliers comprising:
5 means for accessing the SMA from a Web-based
6 Requisition/Catalog (REQ/CAT) Web application;
7 means for selecting by a user who needs to request a technical

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8 contractor a SMA Web site;

9 means for prompting the user through a series of screens in the
10 SMA Web site to enter a Statement of Work (SOW) and complete a skills
11 detail checklist for each of the technical skills requested;

12 means for submitting the request to contracted suppliers who are
13 sent an e-mail notification notifying the supplier that a new request has
14 been entered into the SMA application for them to review and submit a
15 candidate against;

16 means for accessing the SMA Web site database by a supplier to
17 view the request details;

18 means for providing by a supplier a candidate or candidates by
19 accessing the SMA Web site and submitting candidates and appending
20 resumes as appropriate; and

21 means for viewing by the user the supplier responses and
22 associated resumes and either accepting or rejecting each candidate
23 submitted.